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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 002007

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SENSITIVE

FROM USMISSION UNESCO PARIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KPAO](#) [ECPS](#) [ETRD](#) [ECON](#) [EINT](#) [ETTC](#) [EAID](#) [UNESCO](#)

SUBJECT: UNESCO COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION UPDATE

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Communication and Information (C and I) Sector of UNESCO held two program council meetings last week - the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) Council and the Information for All

Programme (IFAP) Council. IPDC members elected a new chair and bureau, reviewed an audit of the program that the University of Oslo made, assessed progress on these reforms, and resolved to launch a broad consultation to develop indicators for media development. Cuba was elected by the IPDC Council to its bureau as the unanimous GRULAC (Latin American and Caribbean Group) candidate. IFAP members elected New Zealand as a new chair, and discussed ethics for journalists and the possibility of general moral principles for information ethics on the Internet. Mission paid close attention to both of these meetings because the Danish cartoon controversy continues to play a prominent role at UNESCO. All eyes are on the Arab group and European Union as they attempt to address this issue in advance of the Executive Board. The Secretariat also has advised the Mission that they are planning a conference on the World Digital Library for the fall. END SUMMARY.

GRULAC at the IPDC Council:

2. (SBU) The IPDC Council elected Denmark to a third term as Chairman of its Bureau. It also elected 7 members: Cuba (GRULAC), Burkina Faso (Rapporteur), the Netherlands (Group I) Russia (Group II, re-elected), Afghanistan (Asia Group), Oman, (Arab Group) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Africa Group) Each region historically nominates by consensus a country to the council, and the council may call a vote if there is not consensus among the regional group. The GRULAC region notified the UNESCO Secretariat the night before the elections that Cuba planned to run, and the Mission, as well as other concerned council members, tried to persuade various GRULAC members to run. All GRULAC countries made clear that the decision to nominate Cuba was theirs alone, and that none of them would oppose Cuba.

3. (SBU) One GRULAC country flatly stated that it was unwilling to challenge Cuba without instructions from his government, and added that doing so would provoke his capital's wrath. He noted that while he personally liked the Danish IPDC chair and appreciated the Danish government's financial support of the IPDC, it was still the country that "brought us the cartoons." The Muslim world, he stated, was completely different, and there had to be some respect for their religion and culture. If Denmark, in these circumstances, could chair the IPDC, he asked, why not have Cuba, even if they had a proven record of opposing media freedom? "This is the clash of civilizations, this is the world we live in today," he added. (COMMENT: Mission notes that GRULAC is maneuvering in other areas: Other delegations have advised the Mission that Cuba, Uruguay, and Venezuela wanted GRULAC to send a group letter to the Director General criticizing Amcit ADG for Education Peter Smith's reorganization plans and urging UNESCO to follow up on recommendations issued by regional UNESCO Ministerial Conferences. This may be a reference to the recent MOST Conference in Buenos Aires. There are a few holdouts in GRULAC that opposed this letter, but they are in the minority. END COMMENT.)

IPDC COUNCIL:

4. The Council discussed a University of Oslo audit of the IPDC program and its reforms and resolved to develop benchmarks to help media professionals, policy makers, development agencies, implementers and project proponents to analyze the various elements of a media system and to identify areas where support is required. Israel, France and other countries expressed interest in better evaluation tools for IPDC programs. A thematic debate was organized in cooperation with UNESCO's Information for All Programme (IFAP) on community radio and blogs.

IFAP AGENDA

15. (SBU) Secretariat sources approached the Mission on the margins of the joint IFAP/IPDC thematic debate to inquire whether we would support a non-instrument "moral" declaration dealing with Infoethics principles. The Secretariat staffer stated that Chile and Peru were

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interested in pursuing this, and speculated that France might also be interested. He stated that he was trying to find other countries that would support the project. (COMMENT: This is a classic example of how the Secretariat often works at UNESCO - a staffer gets an idea and then lobbies countries to take it on - not the other way around. END COMMENT) Mission relayed this conversation to more senior staff that had not heard of any C and I initiatives on infoethics beyond general discussion by IFAP members. The senior staffer noted that some countries active in the IFAP debate had also pushed for ethics for journalists, a move that the C and I sector reportedly opposed since it would hinder media freedom. (COMMENT: The Danish Cartoon Controversy still looms over UNESCO, as the GRULAC debate over Cuba's candidacy unfortunately demonstrated. We note that it has rekindled the "ethics" debate for the Internet and for journalists yet again. While the Secretariat has a strong record of commitment to media freedom, the period ahead may be very bumpy indeed. END COMMENT.)

DANISH CARTOONS:

16. (SBU) Mission was advised by the Secretariat that the most important issue for the C and I Sector at the Executive Board would be the debate on media freedom and UNESCO's role after the Danish Cartoon controversy. While some Arab countries took a harder line than others, the real problem continued to be division among European Union members. The Nordics (COMMENT: Norway and Iceland are not in the European Union. END COMMENT.) were strongly in the corner of media freedom, while Austria, perhaps leading others as EU President, wanted more flexibility and dialogue.

WORLD DIGITAL LIBRARY (WDL):

17. (SBU) The Secretariat staffer also stated that the Library of Congress' John van Oudenarem had been in touch with the Communication and Information sector to follow up on Associate Librarian for Library Services, Deanna Marcum's visit to UNESCO. According to the staffer, UNESCO and van Oudenarem were discussing holding a conference to support the WDL either in Paris or in Washington in the autumn of 2006. She noted the Secretariat's preference for Paris to bring parties together on these questions.

18. (SBU) COMMENT: The sensitivity of issues involving freedom of expression is appearing in multiple UNESCO arenas in advance of the Executive Board. Mission was surprised to learn that the Library of Congress (LOC) had gone forward with joint UNESCO conference plans and notes the continued need for clarifying the lines of communication between the USG and UNESCO on the World Digital Library Project. END COMMENT.

Oliver